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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

M-708

DATE: February 24, 1958

SUBJECT: Discussion Concerning Recent Publicity Given to the Volta River Project.

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Richard Akwei, Second Secretary, Ghana Embassy.
William R. Duggan, Officer-in-Charge, West African Affairs

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Mr. Richard Akwei, Second Secretary, Ghana Embassy, called on me late Friday, February 21st to inquire into the background of the State Department's statement to the press concerning the possible U.S. participation in the Volta River Project as reflected by the Eisenhower-Nkrumah exchange of letters.

Mr. Akwei reported to me his Ambassador had become concerned when he saw the statement in the New York Times on Friday, February 21 in which the State Department, in Mr. Akwei's words, made a "rebuttal" to Prime Minister Nkrumah's Parliamentary statement relating to Volta and possible U.S. participation therein.

In response to Mr. Akwei's query, I emphasized that the oral statement made by the Department was in no sense a rebuttal of the Prime Minister's position but instead merely represented a clarification of the U.S. Government's position as expressed in President Eisenhower's letter of January 9 to Prime Minister Nkrumah. I also emphasized that the Department of State had been unaware of the Prime Minister's Parliamentary statement concerning this matter until late the preceding day (February 20) when the news services sent the story from Accra. Thereafter, in answer to a direct inquiry from the Reuters correspondent, it was considered necessary to issue a statement of clarification and brief explanation. The reasoning which lay behind this attitude of the Department, as I explained to Mr. Akwei, was that in view of the President's letter, if no statement were made it would build up press speculation, and that if a simple and straightforward statement were made of the type eventually released it would tend to quiet speculation and place the present U.S. position in better perspective.

cc: Mr. Akwei

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Mr. Akwei seemed both [illegible] and satisfied by this explanation. He reported that his Embassy had intended to send a message of explanation to his Government in Accra but that it would probably not do so now.

In the discussion which followed I learned that his Embassy had been totally unaware of the Prime Minister's parliamentary statement on Volta. I then told Mr. Akwei that, subsequent to issuing our press statement on the matter, we received a message from our Embassy in Accra which carried a portion of the Prime Minister's subject speech. I gave Mr. Akwei a [illegible] copy of that portion of the speech which related to the Volta scheme.

AF:AFC:ARDuggan:rmcp 2/25/58

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